

ST. LOUIS ARSENAL.

[To accompany Bill H. R. No. 132.]

MAY 15, 1860.

Mr. BOTELEER, from the Committee on Military Affairs, made the following

REPORT.

*The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the memorial of the mayor and common council and of a large number of the citizens of St. Louis, in the State of Missouri, having had the same under consideration, report :*

That the United States arsenal at St. Louis was located in 1825, when the town was quite small, and its southern limit did not reach within a mile and a half of the arsenal, whilst now the city extends three miles beyond it.

One of the chief recommendations of the site as a military depot at the time of its purchase was the deep water and good landing which its front upon the Mississippi afforded, but which has since been entirely destroyed by the change which has taken place in the bed of the river, leaving an intervening sand bar of three-quarters of a mile in extent.

Jefferson barracks was then the principal military point in the west, and, as the distributing post for troops, was generally fully garrisoned, and therefore unsuitable for an extensive deposit of arms, with their attendant repair shops and laboratories, in which gunpowder is so largely used. But, with the recession of our frontier, the military forces have been necessarily withdrawn further west, and the barracks are now entirely deserted, affording a most desirable position to which the arsenal might be removed, and to ground already in possession of the United States.

Within the present walls of the St. Louis arsenal there are near two hundred thousand stand of arms, together with a constant supply of one hundred and fifty barrels of gunpowder, used in the manufactory of cartridges, &c., which are wholly unprotected from incendiary depredations, whilst the danger from accidental explosion is too grave and imminent to be contemplated with composure by any of the twenty thousand inhabitants residing within its immediate neighborhood.

The growth of the city, with its commercial and manufacturing enterprise, has already closely encircled the walls of this establish-

ment, and a very serious inconvenience is suffered, not only from the want of the ground which they enclose, but also from the blocking up of so many streets in the direction of the river, the impediments it offers to business, the increased insurances it entails, the danger with which it constantly threatens the lives of thousands of citizens, and the depreciating influence which its proximity exercises upon millions of dollars of property, much of which, for all available and practicable purposes, is rendered utterly valueless.

The arsenal in question encloses thirty-eight acres of ground, which cost the government originally eight thousand dollars, but which, if now laid out in lots and sold at auction, would bring at least twenty dollars per front foot, or an aggregate of about three hundred thousand dollars, independent of what the buildings would sell for.

Therefore, in view of the foregoing facts, the committee are of opinion that the St. Louis arsenal, being a dangerous evil and unnecessary obstruction, ought to be removed from the city, and they report the accompanying bill in conformity with that opinion.